



Charles Sturt
University

Three Rivers
Department of
Rural Health

Information for Clinical Supervisors

Three Rivers DRH work to build rural health workforce capacity by supporting rural health placements. Clinical supervisors are critical in providing students with quality rural learning experiences. We provide information and resources to support you in undertaking this role.

Live. Study. Work. Rural.

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What is supervision?

Placements are mandatory for health degrees, allowing students to integrate theory into practice and develop clinical, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Supervision is one of the key mechanisms for facilitating learning and helps to ensure high-quality and safe patient care during placement. Modes of supervision vary in accordance with the disciplines' accreditation requirements but usually include educational, supportive, and administrative functions.

Modes of supervision

- Individual supervision – one supervisor and one supervisee in a private session for reflection and learning.
- Peer supervision – an informal setting with peers at an equivalent clinical level providing each other with support and feedback in a reciprocal process. This differs from traditional supervision modes as there is no 'expert', i.e. supervisor present.
- Group supervision – one supervisor facilitating discussion with two or more supervisees to allow learning from each other's experiences.

For further information, please refer to our online learning module on this topic, [Module 1: Introduction to Supervision](#).

The supervisor-student relationship

As a supervisor, you will play a leading role in the education and training of students. The student is there to learn from you. Your role is to guide the student in the application of their clinical skills, observe them interacting with patients, and provide constructive feedback on their performance. When establishing a relationship with your supervisee, it is important to ensure that both parties have clear expectations of the process from the beginning. Provide examples of what learning is expected of students throughout the placement and how they can demonstrate it. Importantly, you must provide them with the opportunities to demonstrate it.

For further information, please refer to our online learning module on this topic, [Module 3: Creating A Best Practice Clinical Learning Environment](#).

Rural health placements

Placement in a rural health setting differs from that of their urban counterparts in many ways, including modes of service delivery, managing boundaries, and needs versus available resources. They are unique and come with challenges; however, they also produce a great sense of community, job satisfaction and fulfilment. Supervising a rural health placement is rewarding as you are showcasing your chosen career to students and your chosen way of life and town. Remember that in growing our own, we aim to enhance the rural experience for the students we supervise.

For further information, please refer to our online learning module on this topic, [Module 2: Enhancing the Rural Experience](#).

Creating a positive placement experience

The first day of placement sets the tone for the student. Ensure they feel welcome by providing a sound orientation, including but not limited to a tour of your organisation and an introduction to all staff. Discuss the placement learning program with the student, clarifying expectations, workplace policies and procedures, and your organisation's cultural norms and practices. It can be helpful to provide students with a written timetable for their first week, including any meetings with different teams and/or professionals with whom they may interact. Schedule supervision sessions into this timetable right from the start and ensure you regularly communicate your availability.

For further information, please refer to the resources on this topic, [Promoting a positive learning environment](#) and [Chapter 2: Student Orientation](#).

Providing feedback

Providing feedback on performance is essential to learning. In your first supervision session, introduce and define the process of feedback with your student so they understand its purpose, intended delivery, and the expectations of them to action it as required. For feedback to be embraced by a student, a supervisor must first ensure psychological safety and a strong educational alliance. It needs to be relevant, individualised, and based on observations. Sometimes, providing feedback means communicating to a student that their performance is unsatisfactory, addressing unprofessional behaviour, and discussing sensitive issues. These challenging conversations usually involve intense emotions, differing opinions, a power imbalance, and uncertainty about outcomes. It is important that these conversations are not avoided but instead dealt with as soon as possible.

For further information, please refer to our online learning module on this topic, [Module 5: Challenging Conversations](#).

Supports

The Three Rivers DRH Rural Health Education team provide information and 'on the ground' support for supervisors working within our footprint. Make sure you contact your local Three Rivers DRH Clinical Educator to support you in supervising students. You can also refer to our online learning module on this topic, [Module 6: Self-Care for Clinicians](#).

Workplace learning teams at each university can help supervisors and students; contact them early if issues arise or when students are performing below expectations. They can provide you with resources, tools, and guides to support you as a supervisor and guide you in using any discipline-specific assessment and reporting tools.

Counselling services are available to students through their university, and you can encourage students to access them as needed. Students can also access the following resources:

- [Rural Placement Guide, National Rural Health Student Network](#)
- [Mental Health Guide – When the Cowpat Hits the Windmill, National Rural Health Student Network](#)

Resources

More information about our people, locations, placement models, student support, clinical supervision training, and professional development opportunities is available on our website, including:

- [Learn about our Rural Health Education workstream](#)
- [Contact our Rural Health Education team](#)

Further resources:

[The Wiley International Handbook of Clinical Supervision](#)

[Clinical Supervision Handbook, Government of Western Australia Drug and Alcohol Office](#)

[The SuperGuide: A Handbook for Supervising Allied Health Professionals](#)

[The SuperGuide: A Supervision Continuum for Nurses and Midwives](#)

[ClinEdAus](#)

[Best Practice Clinical Learning Environment \(BPCLE\) Framework Resource](#)

[National Placement Evaluation Centre](#)

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Charles Sturt University Three Rivers Department of Rural Health is funded under the Australian Government's Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program. In consortium partnership with the University of New South Wales, The University of Notre Dame Australia, and Western Sydney University, Three Rivers DRH aims to improve the recruitment and retention of nursing, midwifery, allied health and dentistry professionals in rural and remote Australia.

We support students in rural learning experiences, develop multidisciplinary resources, provide training for health professionals, and undertake rural health research with regional communities.

We pay our respects to all First Nations Elders past, present and emerging. In particular, we acknowledge the Wiradjuri, Ngunawal, Gundungurra, Birpai, Wamba Wamba Perrepa Perrepa, Wailwan, Wadi Wadi and Nari Nari peoples of Australia, who are the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live, work and learn together.

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